United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of
Public Affairs

Selected Speeches and News Releases

July 30 - August 6, 1992

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Public Affairs

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MEDIA ADVISORY: NAL HOSTS ELECTRONIC MEDIA WORKSHOP

WASHINGTON, July 30—A workshop entitled "Agrilit: Electronic Access to Agricultural Literature" will be hosted on August 17 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Library at their facility in Beltsville, Md., 10301 Baltimore Blvd.

The one-day workshop will focus on the use of CD-ROM technology to improve access to the professional literature of agriculture.

Representatives from agricultural professional associations and societies as well as a number of USDA officials will participate. Speakers will address key issues and current experiences in using electronic media. Conference attendees will also participate in discussion groups that will focus on the specific topics of electronic formats, journal selection, licensing and distribution, preservation and access and the development of long-range plans.

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NEW WEEVIL TO FIGHT POISONOUS YELLOW STARTHISTLE WEEDS

WASHINGTON, July 30—A newly imported weevil from Greece attacks a thorny weed that spears hikers, poisons horses and crowds range and pasture plants in this country, a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist said.

"We have begun releasing this weevil for the first time, to see if it can help halt the spread of the weed, known as yellow starthistle," said Charles E. Turner of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The brown, quarter-inch-long weevil is named Larinus curtus.

ARS scientists have recruited four other insects to combat the weed, including two different weevils and a fly, which have established colonies in

some western states. "This new weevil may become a particularly valuable member of the team because it eats seeds the other insects might not damage," Turner said.

On July 24, he released the first of the weevils—about 270 adult insects—on a cattle ranch about 45 miles north of Sacramento. Colleagues have released the weevils in Oregon, Idaho and Washington.

Yellow starthistle infests more than 9 million acres of parks, range, vineyards, orchards and roadsides in 23 states. The most heavily infested states are California, Oregon, Idaho and Washington.

The weed causes "chewing disease" (nigropallidal encephalomalacia) in horses, leading to death by dehydration or starvation, said Turner, a research botanist at ARS' Western Regional Research Center, Albany, Calif.

"We want the adult weevils to feed on starthistle flowers and pollen, find mates and lay eggs to establish a self-sustaining colony," said Turner. The wormlike weevil larvae that hatch from the eggs eat developing seeds in starthistle's flowerhead, he said.

"Seeds are starthistle's only way of reproducing itself," Turner said. "By eating those seeds, the weevils might suppress the weed." Starthistle entered this country about a century ago from its native Eurasia.

Turner received two shipments of weevils from ARS colleague David Kashefi, who plucked them from starthistle in northern Greece. Kashefi collects beneficial insects for the agency's European Biological Control Laboratory in Montpellier, France. The insects were shipped according to federal and state regulatory requirements.

Tests by Turner and Montpellier researchers Luca Fornasari and Rouhollah Sobhian have shown that the weevil lays its eggs only in yellow starthistle and poses no danger to native plants or to crops, people or pets.

The weed grows one to three feet high and puts out bright yellow flowers, about the size of a quarter, in spring and summer. Sharp spines form beneath the base of each flowerhead.

"Starthistle flourishes in this country because, for the most part, the weed has been free of its natural enemies," Turner said. "In Europe, dozens of starthistle-attacking insects keep it in check. You'll find individual starthistle plants scattered here and there, and an occasional dense patch of thistles, but nothing like the pastures and fields full of it that we have here."

Employing thistle-eating insects is a strategy known as biological control. When successful, the approach is "usually less expensive, more environmentally friendly and more effective over the long term than other options such as chemical herbicides," Turner said.

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WORLD MARKET PRICE; USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATES FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, July 30—Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the United States Department Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), the coarse count adjustment and the user marketing certificate payment rates in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, July 31, through midnight Thursday, Aug. 6.

Because the 1992 marketing year gegins Aug. 1, the adjusted world price (AWP) for July 31 is calculated using the 1991-crop price support loan schedule of premiums and discounts. The AWP for the period Aug. 1 througl Aug. 6 is calculated using the price support loan schedule of premiums and discounts in effect for the 1992 crop of upland cotton.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quote for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the USNE price and the NE price.

Based on data for the week ending July 30, a further adjustment to the calculated AWP for July 31 may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is 93 percent of the 1991 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 4.53 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations.

I.	Calculated AWP	47.42 cents per pound
	1991 Base Loan Rate	50.77 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate	93
II.	USNE Price	66.25 cents per pound
	NE Price	- 61.72 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed	4.53 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant

data, no further adjustment will be made to the calculated AWP for July 31.

Based on data for the week ending July 30, the AWP for base quality upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment in effect for July 31 are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price			
NE Price		61.72	
Adjustments:			
Average U.S. spot market location	12.05		
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	1.90		
Average U.S. location	0.35		
Sum of Adjustments		-14.30	
Calculated AWP		47.42	
Further AWP Adjustment		- 0	
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE		47.42	cents/lb.

Coarse Count Adjustment		
NE Price	61.72	
NE Coarse Count Price	-56.53	
	5.19	
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton	-4.20	
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	0.99	cents/lb.

Because the AWP in effect for July 31 is below the 1990, 1991, and 1992 base quality loan rates of 50.27, 50.77, and 52.35 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the AWP, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus any applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will also be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Based on data for the week ending July 30, a further adjustment to the calculated AWP effective Aug. 1 through Aug. 6 may also be made. The calculated AWP is 91 percent of the 1992 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 4.53 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations.

I.	Calculated AWP	47.81 cents per pound
	1992 Base Loan Rate	52.35 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate	91
II.	USNE Price	66.25 cents per pound
	NE Price	- 61.72 cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed	4.53 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment to the calculated AWP for the period Aug. 1 through Aug. 6 will be made.

Based on data for the week ending July 30, the AWP for base quality upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment in effect from Aug. 1 through Aug. 6 are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price		
NE Price		61.72
Adjustments:		
Average U.S. spot market location	12.05	
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	1.55	
Average U.S. location	0.31	
Sum of Adjustments		-13.91
Calculated AWP		47.81
Further AWP Adjustment		- 0
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE		47.81 cents/lb.

Count Adjustment	
NE Price	61.72
NE Coarse Count Price	-56.53
	5.19
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton	-3.95
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	1.24 cents/lb.

Because the AWP in effect from Aug. 1 through Aug. 6 is below the 1990, 1991 and 1992 base quality loan rates of 50.27, 50.77 and 52.35 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the AWP, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus any applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will also be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP in effect during this period is below the 1992-crop loan rate, cash loan deficiency payments will be paid to eligible producers who agree to forgo obtaining a price support loan with respect to their 1992 crop. The payment rate is equal to the difference between the loan rate and the AWP. Producers are allowed to obtain a loan deficiency payment on a bale-by-bale basis.

Based on data for the week ending July 30, the USNE current price exceeded the NE current price by more than 1.25 cents per pound and the

AWP did not exceed 130 percent of the 1991 crop year base quality loan rate for four consecutive weeks. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate, based on current shipment prices, is 4.72 cents per pound. This rate is applicable from July 31 through Aug. 6 for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to Sept. 30, 1992. Relevant data used in determining the user marketing certificate payment rate, based on current shipment prices, are summarized below:

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period	USNE Current Price	NE Current Price	USNE Minus NE	Certificate Payment Rate 1/
1	July 9, 1992	71.15	65.38	5.77	4.52
2	July 16, 1992	72.00	65.47	6.53	5.28
3	July 23, 1992	71.60	65.21	6.39	5.14
4	July 30, 1992	70.60	64.63	5.97	4.72

1/ USNE current price minus NE current price for Week 4, minus 1.25 cents.

Based on data for the week ending July 30, the USNE forward price exceeded the NE forward price by more than 1.25 cents per pound and the AWP did not exceed 130 percent of the 1991 crop year base quality loan rate for four consecutive weeks. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate, based on forward shipment prices, is 3.28 cents per pound. This rate is applicable from July 31 through Aug. 6 for cotton contracted by exporters for delivery after Sept. 30, 1992. Relevant data used in determining the user marketing certificate payment rate, based on forward shipment prices, are summarized below:

Week	For the Friday through Thursday Period	USNE Forward Price	NE Forward Price	USNE Minus NE	Certificate Payment Rate 1/
1	July 9, 1992	67.00	62.93	4.07	2.82
2	July 16, 1992	67.75	62.88	4.87	3.62
3	July 23, 1992	67.20	62.43	4.77	3.52
4	July 30, 1992	66.25	61.72	4.53	3.28

1/ USNE forward price minus NE forward price for Week 4, minus 1.25 cents.

The next announcement of the AWP, coarse count adjustment and user marketing certificate payment rate will be made on Thursday, Aug. 6.

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USDA REQUESTS COMMENTS ON 1993 FEED GRAIN PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, July 31—The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today asked for public comment on whether the 1993 corn, grain sorghum and barley acreage reduction program percentages should be 0, 5, 7.5, 12.5, or some other percent within the range. The oats ARP is zero percent as set by the 1990 farm bill.

The 1993 ARP percentages must be announced by Sept. 30.

Keith Bjerke, CCC executive vice president, said options will be posted which will include estimated planted acreage, production, domestic and export use, ending stocks, season average producer price, program participation rate and cost to the federal government. Details appear in Aug. 3 Federal Register.

Comments must be received by Sept. 14 to be considered and may be FAXed to (202) 690-1346 or sent to: Deputy Administrator, Policy Analysis, USDA/ASCS, Room 3090-S, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013-2415.

The comments will be available for public inspection in Room 3740, South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., during business hours.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the regulatory impact analysis, contact Philip Sronce, director, Grains Analysis Division, at (202) 720-4417.

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U.S. BREAKS STALEMATE WITH MEXICO OVER MEAT AND POULTRY EXPORTS

WASHINGTON, July 31—The United States and Mexico announced today they have reached a food inspection understanding that allows U.S. meat and poultry plants to continue exporting products to Mexico, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture official.

"Both countries will use the same criteria and guidelines when reviewing each other's meat and poultry plants," said Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman. "This keeps in place stringent food safety standards, while providing the same certification procedures."

Mexican agriculture officials recently threatened to stop on August 15 all U.S. meat and poultry exports from entering Mexico until Mexican officials certified more than 500 U.S. plants that routinely export their products to Mexico.

"Mexico's individual plant certification procedure would have created an unfair trade situation, with no added food safety measures," said Veneman. "We feel very strongly that we should move worldwide toward certification of each country's inspection system rather than the individual plants."

Mexico's proposed certification procedure to review all U.S. plants varied significantly from U.S. procedures. After the exporting country's inspection system meets U.S. standards, USDA allows the exporting country to certify plants as eligible to export to the United States.

The United States and Mexico also agreed to form a technical working group to address meat and poultry inspection issues.

FSIS is responsible for ensuring the safety of meat and poultry imports. The agency reviews foreign inspection systems to ensure they are equal to the U.S. inspection program.

FSIS is dedicated to protecting the public by ensuring that meat and poultry products are safe, wholesome and accurately labeled.

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USDA WILL NOT ADJUST 1993 WHEAT ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, July 31—Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced today there will be no adjustment in the zero percent acreage reduction factor for the 1993 price support and production adjustment program for wheat that was announced on May 29.

The secretary of agriculture is authorized to make adjustments in the 1993 program before July 31 if it is determined that the supply of wheat has changed significantly since the 1993 ARP was first announced.

"This announcement reaffirms our commitment to exports and world markets," Veneman said. "We continue to believe the zero percent level is in the best interests of producers, consumers and all U.S. taxpayers."

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FORMER SOVIET UNION ELIGIBLE FOR PORK UNDER EEP

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3—Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan today announced an opportunity for sales of 30,000 metric tons of U.S. pork to the former Soviet Union under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Export Enhancement Program.

Madigan said this EEP initiative represents a significant opportunity for U.S. pork producers and exporters to break into the market for high-value pork products in the former Soviet Union. "We see real potential for longterm market growth if U.S. pork exports can be competitive with subsidized exports by the European Community," he said. "The EEP will allow U.S. pork producers and exporeers to compete."

The 30,000 tons offered amounts to more than a day's slaughter in the United States nationwide.

Sales of pork will be made to buyers in the former Soviet Union through normal commercial channels at competitive world prices. The export sales will be facilitated through payment of bonuses by USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation. The subsidy will enable U.S. exporters to compete at commercial prices in these markets.

This allocation is the 133rd initiative announced under the EEP. It will be valid for a 1-year period as provided for in the invitation for offers. Details of the program, including invitations for offers from exporters, will be issued in the near future.

For more information call Larry McElvain, (202) 720-6211.

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U.S. DONATES BUTTER TO ALBANIA

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will donate 4,200 metric tons of U.S. butter to Albania, according to Christopher E. Goldthwait, acting general sales manager of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

The $8 million donation includes $5.9 million for butter and $2.1 million for freight costs. The butter will be sold by the Albanian government to the private sector. The proceeds will be used to provide food assistance to the needy and to fund developmental activities primarily in the agricultural sector.

These activities include health and nutritional programs, the promotion of increased agricultural productivity and revitalization of the food processing industry. The supply period is fiscal 1992.

The donation was made under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, which authorizes the donation of surplus commodities owned by the Commodity Credit Corporation to developing countries.

For further information, contact James F. Keefer at (202) 720-5263.

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U.S. DONATES CORN AND SORGHUM TO ZIMBABWE

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will donate 108,000 metric tons of U.S. corn and sorghum to Zimbabwe, according to Christopher E. Goldthwait, acting general sales manager of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

The $18.4 million donation will be used by the Zimbabwean government to provide food assistance to the nearly 4.5 million needy and vulnerable people who are most affected by the drought. The supply period is fiscal 1992.

The donation was made under Section 416(b) of the Agricultural Act of 1949, which authorizes the donation of surplus commodities owned by the Commodity Credit Corporation to developing countries.

For further information, contact James F. Keefer at (202) 720-5263.

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CCC INTEREST RATE FOR AUGUST 3-3/4 PERCENT

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3—Commodity loans disbursed in August by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation will carry a 3-3/4 percent interest rate, according to Keith Bjerke, executive vice president of the CCC.

The 3-3/4 percent interest rate is down from July's 4-1/4 percent and reflects the interest rate charged CCC by the U.S. Treasury in July.

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CHINESE LANDSCAPING TREE MAKES ITS OWN NITROGEN FERTILIZER

WASHINGTON, August 4—A tree from China that fertilizes itself should lower landscaping costs to homeowners and municipalities, report a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist and a colleague formerly at the University of Maryland.

USDA's Peter B. van Berkum said the tree, Maackia amurensis, relies on

bacteria in root nodules to fix nitrogen as a natural fertilizer. A homeowner, a nursery or municipality would be able to plant the tree and be free of using nitrogen fertilizer to promote growth, he said.

That would lower costs and reduce the chance that the fertilizer, as it changes to nitrate in the soil, will pollute water sources, said van Berkum, a plant microbiologist with USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

Van Berkum and William Graves, formerly a horticulturist at the University of Maryland, said the tree, which has no common name, has been growing in this country in Buffalo, N.Y., and the Washington, D.C. area. It was not known that the tree, using soil bacteria called rhizobia, could fix its own nitrogen as fertilizer, they said.

M. amurensis' ability to fix nitrogen, widely studied in soybeans and other legume plants but largely unexplored in trees, was confirmed by van Berkum, Graves and former University of Maryland graduate student Janet M. Batzli after a two-year study from 1989-91.

Nitrogen fixed by the tree is housed in tiny root nodules and delivered directly into the plant, so it doesn't escape into the soil, van Berkum said. These nodules are home to rhizobia bacteria that take nitrogen gas from the air and chemically convert it to a form the tree can use for growth.

Graves said there may be renewed interest in planting the tree in urban landscapes because of the environmental and cost-saving advantages. He said a nursery on Maryland's Eastern Shore is interested in working with the scientists to develop production methods, such as how to inoculate the bacteria in potting soil. That bacteria then would move into the root nodules. "Once we have developed and fine-tuned these procedures, the tree could be available for retail sale within several years," Graves said.

The tree, native to Manchuria, has a growing range from North Carolina to northern Minnesota. It can grow up to 60 feet tall, but averages about 40 feet. It has bronze bark that peels—similar to the white birch tree's bark—and has creamy, white flower clusters that bloom in July, providing color in the summer.

M. amurensis trees are growing at USDA's National Arboretum in Washington and at Sligo Creek Park in Montgomery County, Md.

M. amurensis is a legume, as are more popular landscaping trees such as honey locust and redbud, but those two trees do not fix nitrogen. M. amurensis is one of the few legume trees used in landscaping worldwide that form the tiny root nodules.

"But in this part of the world, this is the only nitrogen-fixing tree we know of that has potential for urban landscapes," said Graves, now at Iowa State University.

The scientists determined that the nitrogen-fixing bacteria are of a genus called Bradyrhizobium—the same genus as rhizobia found on soybean roots, according to van Berkum. He is curator of the ARS-supported international collection of symbiotic nitrogen-fixing bacteria for legume plants at the agency's Soybean and Alfalfa Research Laboratory in Beltsville, Md.

Graves and Batzli found the Chinese tree while searching in this country for nitrogen-fixing landscaping trees for urban areas. He was examining the soil and roots around a pagoda tree (Sophora japonica) at the National Arboretum, when he found a nodule attached to another root growing nearby.

Graves suspected that the root nodule might be nitrogen fixing and sent it to van Berkum, who confirmed that it was. They later verified that the nodule came from M. amurensis.

While studying the trees, Graves heard a report that it was growing in Buffalo. City foresters planted 50 of the trees in 1960 as part of an effort to replace about 95,000 elm trees killed by Dutch Elm disease, which struck in the 1950s. About 30 M. amurensis trees remain along Folger Street in south Buffalo and average about 25 feet tall and a foot in diameter.

The city planted them because they were available at a local nursery, but the foresters did not know that the tree fixed nitrogen. Aside from providing flowers in the summer, M. amurensis grows slowly—the trees on Folger Street grew less than a foot a year. That means their roots don't break sidewalks and clog underground sewer lines as quickly as faster-growing trees.

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, August 4—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Randall Green today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

—long grain whole kernels, 9.65 cents per pound;
—medium grain whole kernels, 8.76 cents per pound;
—short grain whole kernels, 8.74 cents per pound;
—broken kernels, 4.82 cents per pound.

The world market prices announced today reflect the annual adjustments for domestic factors and the bi-annual adjustment for milling yields.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, loan deficiency payment rates and gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price level are:

—for long grain, $0.68 per hundredweight;

—for medium grain, $0.62 per hundredweight;

—for short grain, $0.63 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 12:00:01 A.M. EDT until 12:00:00 a.m. EDT Tuesday, Aug. 11. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Aug. 11 at 7 a.m. EDT. The price announced at that time will be effective from 12:00:01 a.m. EDT Tuesday, Aug. 11.

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Contact: Alicia L. Ford, (202) 720-8998

USDA REVISES UPLAND COTTON STANDARDS EFFECTIVE JULY 1993

WASHINGTON, Aug. 4—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is revising the official grade standards for U.S. upland cotton to separately identify and record the two major grading components, color and leaf. This change becomes effective July 1, 1993.

Daniel D. Haley, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said, "The revision will allow each grade component to stand on its own so that its contribution to end-use value and/or processing performance may be clearly and separately addressed in the buying and selling of cotton."

The separation of grade into color and leaf will require no change in the physical grade standards for U.S. Upland cotton as currently maintained by USDA, Haley said.

The change will reduce the number of official cotton grade standards. There are currently 15 physical and 24 descriptive standards. The revision will maintain the 15 physical standards without alteration but eliminate 14 of the 24 descriptive standards that currently exist only for unique combinations of color and leaf.

The Advisory Committee on Universal Cotton Standards, comprised of representatives from the U.S. cotton industry and overseas delegates, unanimously recommended acceptance of the USDA revision at their triennial meeting in June.